With the Kings in India

A SOUVENIR OF
DR MARTIN LUTHER KINGS'S
VISIT TO INDIA

February–March 1959

GANDHI NATIONAL MEMORIAL FUND

The reprint

The Gandhi Smarak Nidhi feels a deep satisfaction over this reprint of ***With the Kings in India***. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mrs. Coretta Scott King travelled in India for a month in 1959 at the invitation of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. Dr. King was then leading the civil disobedience movement for civil rights in America against racism and inequality. His struggle had the entire world's attention. A decade earlier, India had gained independence from the colonial rulers following a protracted non-violent movement. India had then gone on to adopt a constitution that aimed, among other things, to free our society of untouchability and caste-based inequality.

The Gandhi Smarak Nidhi had extended the invitation to the Kings, and organised the entire visit, to find common ground in the efforts in the two countries to achieve social justice. This was a constructive effort to help incorporate a new world order based on non-violence. After the completion of the the Kings' travel, the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi published a report on it under the title ***With the Kings in India***. For several years, this report has remained out of print. We regard this report a historical document and have decided to reprint it.

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New Delhi
Gandhi National Memorial Fund

THE INVITATION

GANDHI SMARAK NIDHI
Rajghat, New Delhi

27 December 1958.

Dear Dr King,

We in India have watched with sympathy and admiration the non-violent movements of the Negroes in America to achieve their full equality, in law and in spirit, with all others who constitute the citizenship of the United States, and the valiant and personal leadership which you have given to some of them.

We are happy to know you are willing to consider a proposal for your visit to India early.

We are writing this on behalf of the Gandhi National Memorial Fund to give you and Mrs King a very cordial invitation to visit India and to spend three to four weeks in this country.

It would be good if you could share with the Indian people your own experiences and thoughts and, at the same time, study how Mahatma Gandhi evolved the techniques of peaceful action to solve innumerable social and national problems in India. We expect you would be particularly interested to know how Gandhiji wrest led with the problem of untouchability in India and succeeded in showing the way out against the heaviest odds. We would wish you to visit places and institutions associated with the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi and also some of our leading centres of academic learning. And then, certainly, it would be good if you meet Acharya Vinoba Bhave and spend a little time with him quietly and find out for yourself how non-violence is being applied to solve the extremely difficult problem of the land hunger of the poorer peasants in India. It will also interest you to see something of the work of the Community Projects and National Extension Service Blocks which have already covered vast areas in the country.

If you agree to accept our invitation, will you please communicate to our Embassy in Washington the precise days you can give to a visit to India and any other detail you would wish to let us know in advance.

With best wishes and prayers for Christmas and the New Year.

Yours sincerely,
G. Ramachandran
Secretary.

Dr Martin Luther King,
Montgomery, Alabama,
U.S.A.

I GO ROUND WITH THE KINGS

SWAMI VISHWANANDA

America is perhaps the proverbial land of milk and honey. Its fabulous wealth and technical know-how arouses comment covering a whole gamut of emotions. But like all great nations it has its own characteristic problems of social adjustment and their attendant tensions—as old prejudices are shed and new hopes shared.

For us in India the Negro problem—the struggle of the blacks edging towards social equality and of the whites shedding their traditional inhibitions — had in it the elements of a moving and absorbing drama which was as fascinating as the drama of the peaceful and voluntary abolition of casteism and 'untouchability' to establish social justice under the inspiring guidance of Mahatma Gandhi.

The inevitable questions were asked: Would the Negro community succeed in its quest for social parity? How vehement was the opposition to integration in the deep South? The answers were slow in coming but the trend was evident. If Little Rock emphasised the force of law, the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, underlined a people's determination to achieve their ends through nonviolent means.

A few parallels are inevitable. Deep were the feelings on 'untouchability' in the south of India. 'Untouchability', 'unseeability' and even 'unapproachability' existed there, but the inspiration of the Mahatma opened wide the floodgates of love, and 'untouchability' and its offshoots were a thing of the past. In America the people had to invoke the law in order to break segregation; in India we had to make laws to fight 'untouchability'.

I had heard of Dr King's leadership in the Montgomery 'crisis' but I little reckoned on being his companion and guide along with James Bristol during the three weeks of hectic touring, as we

moved across the length and breadth of India in the spring of 1959.

The visit of the Kings — Dr Martin Luther King and his wife Coretta—had been sponsored by the Gandhi National Memorial Fund and the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers). The Quaker Centre in Delhi fully cooperated with the Fund in planning and executing the program. The young Negro leader arrived in Delhi on 10 February and was received at the aerodrome by Smt. Sucheta Kripalani, Vice-Chairman of the Gandhi National Memorial Fund and General Secretary of the Indian National Congress. His vitality and natural charm were evident from the very start. Speaking to pressmen at the Janpath Hotel, he emphasised the purpose of his visit : he had come, he said, to learn about the philosophy of non-violence.

In the days ahead we were to visit many places, big and small : India's large cities and her obscure villages and hamlets, where the Mahatma's feet had trodden and where his message of truth and love had taken wing; Block Development areas, where the awakened villagers are shaping the future; *Gramdan* villages, where the new social order was taking its birth; magnificent temples with their sculptural wealth and ancient monuments in their timeless glory.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur set the ball rolling by inviting the Kings to lunch. Tea was at the Vice-President's residence, followed by a party at the headquarters of the Gandhi National Memorial Fund and a reception at the Quaker Centre. The Kings took everything in their stride and, despite an exhausting schedule, looked forward to meeting the Prime Minister, with whom they were to dine.

The dinner was a significant occasion and Dr King was particularly impressed by Mr Nehru's strong advocacy of nonalignment as an instrument of active faith rather than as a passive acceptance of neutrality. His own views were in tune, for addressing a public meeting later on he made a passionate plea, asking people to eschew violence and to solve their problems in a peaceful manner. He touched on the point again while addressing students at the Delhi University campus.

A delightful call on the President was made doubly memorable by a walk through the Moghul Gardens, where the feast of colour and the grandeur of flowers in full bloom were a breath-taking spectacle which the Kings, I dare say, will ever remember.

Patna was our first halt. The Governor of Bihar, Dr Zakir Hussain, a staunch nationalist Muslim and a co-worker of Gandhiji, invited the Kings to his home and had a friendly talk with them. The pattern of welcome was the same—sincere and heart-warming. They lunched with the Chief Minister and were interested listeners to an old colleague of Gandhiji when he recalled the day with Bapu during the Champaran *Satyagraha*. The little anecdotes recreated a flesh-and-blood figure, defiant but given to the ways of peace, mighty but humble,

at one with the peasants and yet a leader, head and shoulders above all.

From the spacious opulence of Government buildings to the austere simplicity of Jayaprakash Narain's *Ashram* at Sokhodeora was a far cry, but Kings were on a pilgrimage of learning, and rural India perhaps was the reliable pointer to the soul of the nation. It was a great experience to have had those few hours with J. P. and great too was their surprise to find Japanese scholars and technicians among the inmates. After an enjoyable stay we pushed on to Shantiniketan, the abode of peace, founded by the great poet and bard of India—'Gurudev' Tagore. Here was the Vishwa-Bharati— built as a meeting ground of all cultures. The beautiful chorus songs of welcome and farewell by the inmates touched the hearts of the Kings. The Vice-Chancellor and his staff, including the great Chinese scholar, Professor Tan Yun Shan, honoured the distinguished visitors. We would have loved to stay longer, but the lure of that much-maligned and much-admired city, Calcutta, was already upon us. Perhaps it was not a mere coincidence that Dr King had his first taste of labour-union problems when he met the labour-union leaders of this sprawling City.

On to Madras, the city of temples and moonlit beaches. The Kings' stay here was a high-point. They came in contact with a wide cross-section of the people—from the Governor and the Chief Minister to the lowly worker of the Khadi Emporium. They met 'C.R.' The guide books, I am certain, make no mention of Sri. Rajagopalachari, but this monumental personality is not to be missed and no distinguished visitor can afford to go without drinking of his wisdom. He is not only a part of the history of these regions; he has been the maker of history and, more than that, 'the conscience keeper of the Mahatma'. The Kings paid a visit to his small, yellow, double-storeyed building in Tyagarayanagar where the elder statesman lives in 'active' retirement. A visit to the rock-cut temples of Mahabalipuram, far from the bustle and din—even though of a short duration —was refreshing. We then visited a few villages covered by the Community Development program.

Thence we proceeded to Gandhigram—the home of Gandhian workers— which was perhaps the last major engagement in the state of Madras of lasting memory. The six-mile drive from Dindigul, between the blue hills, the gentle breeze wafting across the valley and the countryside bathed in the grey light of dawn, was unforgettable.

Gandhigram was a picture of activity. Here was a community living in simplicity but throbbing with life. The five-hundred-strong *Shantisena* in spotless white *khadi* received Dr King and gave him the salute. Dr King was impressed by the activities in this place which high-lighted the Gandhian approach to economic and educational uplift. Going around the Khadi and Village Industries Court they saw how Gandhiji's innate sense had aimed at the equitable distribution of wealth. Mrs King, who was particularly moved, said that Gandhigram would ever remain green in her memory. Although

much of India's tourist appeal, I guess, lies in the magnificent edifices and sculptural glory of civilizations which flourished in the past (the Madurai Minakshi Temple, with its towering *gopuram* studded with figures and striking images, being a pertinent reminder) the new India of Gandhiji's creation and the simple lights like Gandhigram burning here and there and shedding lustre on his way of life were to the Kings a lesson in discipline for nonviolence.

Next on our itinerary was Trivandrum, capital of India's only non-Congress state. The paradox of a communist regime functioning within a parliamentary framework is symbolic of much that is Kerala. A very high rate of literacy coexists here with an equally high rate of educated unemployed. The land is remarkably fertile but food is in short supply. The Chief Minister, 'E.M.S.', has plans to boost production. Speaking to Dr King at a luncheon party, he envisaged ultimate communist rule for the whole of India, but the accent was on a gradual pace. A visit to the little shrine at Cape Comorin—the land's end of India—marking the spot where a portion of Gandhiji's ashes were immersed, rounded off our stay in Kerala.

The proposed journey to Mysore and the Brindavan Gardens, *via* the Blue Mountains and the games sanctuary, was dropped to avoid the strain. Instead we flew to Bangalore. As elsewhere it was a full schedule.

We visited several industries in Bangalore and the Kings, I guess, found nostalgic reminders, but the *piece-de resistance* was the All-India Cattle Show which we attended along with the young but wise Governor of Mysore, Sri. Jayachamaraja Wodeyar. Deputy Union Minister Sri. M.V. Krishnappa was particular that we visit the show. It was well that we did so. I still remember the $ 8000-prize bull, defiant in its might and proud of its pedigree.

But arriving at Bombay the next day, our visit to *Mani Bhavan* dispelled any notions of pedigree that may have lingered in our memory. It was a simple building in no way distinguishable from the hundred other buildings around it. It was sacred to us because the Mahatma had lived and worked here once. Memories of his living—the many letters, the pictures of his early life, the arrangement of his articles of daily use, like the bed he used, the *charkha* etc.—were all kept clean and as though ready to be used by him again if he ever did come back. The simplicity was touching and the Kings were moved, as we all were. Sri. R. R. Diwakar, Chairman of the Gandhi National Memorial Fund, received Dr King and took him round. Later addressing a public meeting Dr King spoke at length on the Negro problem. He said that the situation was improving. The whites were beginning to realise the futility of a policy which was so completely divorced from the democratic urges of the twentieth century and the teachings of Christ. The pattern of international relationship was fast changing : political equilibrium was shifting and in this Space Age, rivalries based on colour, caste or creed were obviously out of

tune. He spoke in earnest but without rancour. The problem of integration was essentially one of time, for, as he said, 'the coloured people all over the world have come a long, long way, but we have a long, long way to go'.

From Bombay we flew on to the *Sabarmati Ashram* which Gandhiji founded on his arrival in India from South Africa. Gandhiji had stayed here the longest—nearly eighteen years—working out his way for the freedom of the country and the new social order. Here it was that some of his closest associates got their training for non-violent action. Here it was that he started on his march to the seashore to free salt from taxation and to defy the mighty British Government. But he left, never to come back, as he had vowed not to return without India's independence. Independence came only twenty-seven years later. Sabarmati gets its names from its proximity to the river bearing the name. The Kings had a great experience going round the hallowed place and meeting in prayer the six hundred or so inmates—most of them Harijans. They also saw the filing of the large number of letters written by and to Gandhiji, which was going on briskly. We came back much refreshed mentally and feeling grateful for the purity and the strength we had gained by the visit.

Our long-cherished desire to see the spiritual heir of Gandhiji in action was soon to materialise. Our good friend and guide, J.P., had taken care of that. We arrived at Ajmer and were immediately whisked off to the village where Vinoba was meeting the members of the Peace Brigade from all over India. After lunch we drove nine miles back to our camp in a picturesque old city of the Rajputs. The Kings did the *padayatra* (march on foot) next morning with Vinobaji —trekking a few miles with him. The *Bhoodan* leader explained to the visitors how the *Bhoodan* movement had now grown into the *Gramdan* and *Shantisena* movements. The visitors were impressed by the sweetness that surrounded this gentle but determined soul. His plea was for the kingdom of compassion. When asked for a message for America, he said in his very characteristic way: 'It would be presumptuous on my part to give a message to a Christian nation'.

After returning to Delhi the Kings paid a visit to the Tajmahal, 'The Paradise on Earth', which reminded us of the oft-quoted Three Wonders of India—the Himalayas, Gandhiji and the Tajmahal.

The Gandhi National Memorial Fund bade farewell at a party presided over by the Chairman, Sri. R. R. Diwakar, who addressed them as messengers of non-violence and makers of peace.

The send-off to the Kings nearly a month after they landed in India was a very cordial one. Some of us were very silent ; the relationship that had developed was too sacred. When the heart speaks the tongue is silent. Our eyes searched the skies until the plane that carried the Kings to Pakistan disappeared over the horizon.

NOTES FROM MY TOUR-DIARY

JAMES E. BRISTOL

February 10 : Delhi.

Dr and Mrs King arrived at Palam Airport, and were accorded a warm reception, though understandably fewer people were on hand than had been there on Sunday. The press, news photographers, and newsreel cameramen were there in full force. The Kings were given many garlands. G. Ramachandran and Sucheta Kripalani garlanded and welcomed them on behalf of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi... A good press conference at the Janpath Hotel.... After luncheon with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur a brief reception at the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. . . . Tea with Dr Radhakrishnan. The Kings were very much impressed by their hour's conversation with India's great-minded and deeply spiritual Vice-President. The reception at the Quaker Centre followed. It brought together a wide cross-section of both New Delhi and Old Delhi people. Students both from India and other countries, prominent people in India's public life, diplomats from a number of the Embassies were present. The Kings remarked about the international character of the gathering. The dinner date with Mr Nehru which the Kings' late arrival had cancelled the night before had been moved to Tuesday. Many people have been amazed that the Prime Minister would switch the dinner in this way. This certainly speaks volumes for the influence of Ramachandran and the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, for it was he who requested the change. Lady Mountbatten and one or two other guests were included in the dinner party. The evening proved most meaningful for the Kings.

February 11 : Delhi.

Before breakfast Dr and Mrs King went to Rajghat to lay a wreath on the *samadhi.*

The Kings arrive at Palam airport

—and kneel in prayer at the Gandhi Samadhi, Rajghat, New Delhi

They call on the President of India

—and later on the Vice-President

They meet the Prime Minister

—and the then Congress President

Receiving a gift of books from the Chairman, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi

Greeted by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur

In Madras with the Governor

—and in Bombay with the Chief Minister

With Gandhigram workers in South India

With village workers in South India

With fellow Quakers

At the public meeting in Bombay

Singing to an Indian audience

In a setting of Indian women

Both of them were obviously deeply moved. Martin Luther King knelt in prayer for some time after having placed the wreath on the *samadhi*.... Lunch with Sucheta and Acharya Kripalani at their home. The occasion proved to be very stimulating, as conversations with Acharya Kripalani usually are. Coretta King was present at a delightful tea tendered by Sri. Jairamdas Doulatram, now in charge of editing and publishing the works of Gandhi in English.... A public meeting at Sapru House was well attended, and Dr King's first major address in India was well received. Morarji Desai, Union Finance. Minister, was our host for dinner. Sushila Nayar and U.N. Dhebar were among the small group assembled there. An excellent evening of discussion both about Gandhi, as people there had known him, and about the application of Gandhian principles to the India of 1959.

February 12: Delhi.

In the morning we all went to the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, and soon found ourselves engaged in a fascinating discussion with Ramachandran about Gandhi, the principles of non-violence, India's pressing present-day problems. It was difficult to bring an end to this informative conversation, but an early luncheon appointment with Kaka Kalelkar was calling, and we were forced to leave the Nidhi. The Delhi University Students Union had arranged an open meeting for the students at Ramjas College. In spite, of the holiday that had crept upon us unexpectedly a good audience was assembled. Martin challenged the students to put an end to prejudice and tyranny throughout the world—and to do it non-violently. Some good discussion followed. This meeting was remembered thereafter as the only meeting in the entire four weeks where a question was raised about John Foster Dulles.... After tea with Dr Rajendra Prasad at the Rashtrapati Bhavan the Kings parted company. He met Sarvodaya workers at the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, while Coretta King talked to the African students assembled at the Quaker Centre. Already the word had gone round that Coretta King was a gifted singer—and on three occasions that day she had been asked to sing after her husband had delivered his address and after she herself had spoken to the African group.

February 13 : Patna.

The Kings got a taste of early morning rising habits in India. We had to reach the airport by 6 a.m. to be weighed in for the plane to Patna. . . , Martin addressed a student gathering at the University, and after a welcome cup of tea went immediately to take the train to Gaya. Jayaprakash Narain rode with us to Gaya, and a most stimulating conversation ensued as the passenger train made its leisurely way to Gaya. Martin found J.P.'s decentralist ideas challenging, but he could not go as far as J.P. is prepared to go. The next day, after a long jeep ride to reach J.P.'s *Ashram*, he was to point out that even Jayaprakash Narain is dependent upon a factory-produced vehicle to keep his *Ashram* in touch with the surrounding community.

February 14: Gaya.

Immediately after breakfast we visited the Buddhist monastery and the historic

Buddhist temple at Buddha Gaya. Also spent a few minutes at the small *Ashram* nearby established by Vinoba Bhave. Then a seventy-four mile drive to J.P.'s *Ashram*. This was both a revelation and a revolution-in-the-process for Martin and Coretta King. Dr Lawrence D. Reddick, their travelling companion from the States, had remarked a day or two earlier that all big cities all over the world are much alike, and that he hardly felt yet that he had left New York City. At the *Ashram* I asked him if he still thought that he was in New York, and I received a powerful and emphatic 'No' as an answer. Here at the *Ashram* I noticed for the first time what was to become increasingly evident during our month together. I refer to Martin's great love for children. He was almost like the Pied Piper, and moved about the *Ashram* with several children clutching his arm or holding his hand.

February 15 : Shantinikeian.

Our early morning start was getting earlier ! We left the train at Burdwan at 4.30 a.m. and were driven to Shantiniketan in a truck. . . . Martin spoke to a wonderfully warm and friendly gathering in the afternoon. Off to Calcutta where we arrived in time to have dinner served in our rooms at the fabulous Grand Hotel —what a country of contrasts !

February 16: Calcutta.

The Gandhi Smarak Nidhi had arranged some excellent interviews with individuals who had been close to Gandhi and deeply involved in the Indian independence movement. These people came to the Hotel to see Martin. Very valuable and searching discussions followed... A press conference at 5 p... at the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi offices. Here King asked the press some questions after they had put their queries to him. He wanted to know their opinion about the continuing influence of Gandhi in India today, and about their estimate of India's most pressing problems. A good open meeting followed. Ben and Emily Polk, Calcutta Quakers, entertained the King party at dinner. About twenty-five of Calcutta's leaders in the field of social interests and concerns, among them Nirmal Kumar Bose, were included as guests.

February 17 : Calcutta.

A very good student meeting with an overflow crowd. Martin Luther King spoke about the struggle for freedom and justice on the part of peoples of colour all over the world. He documented the assertion that tremendous progress has been made within the last twenty-five years ('We have come a long, long way'), but he emphasised the fact that great and grave injustices remain, and the challenge is upon us to remove the last vestiges of tyranny and exploitation and establish genuine freedom and justice for all ('but we have a long, long way to go'). A meeting with labour-union leaders over a cup of tea; then a public meeting. At the end of the evening Coretta King was thrilled to be taken to the All India Radio studios to hear some Indian music (her first) and to see a display of Indian musical instruments.

February 18 : Madras.

I was detained in Calcutta for one day, but upon arrival in Madras I was told that the two meetings on the 18th —one with students, the other a public meeting—were the best we had had thus far. Our accommodations in the Raj Bhavan were the ultimate in comfort and beauty. When I arrived by night

airmail on the morning of the 19th the entire party had fallen in love with Madras!

February 19 : Madras.

A brief but meaningful call on Rajagopalachari. Then on to Mahabalipuram, and after lunch a visit to some of the Community Development work being done in the N.E.S. Blocks. Back to Madras; tea with the Joint Development Commissioner of Madras State, a man dedicated to the application of Gandhian principles in today's India; and on to the train.

February 20 : Gandhigram.

We were fortunate to visit Gandhigram on Friday when the weekly prayer meeting is held late in the afternoon. Portions of scripture or other religious writings are read from Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist sources. Martin delivered a devotional message at the end. This was the only occasion on the trip when a major address by King had to be translated for his audience. Brief greetings to groups on certain occasions were translated, but his regular talks were delivered before audiences that understood English.... The day ended with a welcome musical entertainment by some of the Gandhigram people just before and after the evening meal.

February 21 : Madurai and environs.

We left Gandhigram about 9 a. m. to visit three villages. This was to prove an informative and exciting day for the Kings, for this was their first opportunity to visit a village. We spent time in two *Gramdan* villages, and in one Harijan village, where efforts are being made to revive the weaving skill of the villagers. This was a pretty depressed village, but the people welcomed us with much genuine hospitality, and insisted upon providing us with coconuts and preparing them so that we could both drink the milk and eat some of the raw coconut. All of this was absolutely 'first' for the Kings. This visit also provided the Kings with their first opportunity to walk through a village and enter village homes. Dr (Mrs) Soundaram Ramachandran, wife of G. Ramachandran and moving spirit at Gandhigram, accompanied us; it was she who made possible these village visits, and who served as guide, friend, and interpreter throughout the day. Each *Gramdan* village had something of its own to give us. At the first *Gramdan* village we engaged in long and very instructive discussions. Here the N.E.S. Block workers were providing not only technical skill and help, but were sharing also in the making of policy decisions, and were clearly providing both practical and inspirational leadership of the highest order. At the second *Gramdan* village we were to be guests for lunch, and here for the first time Martin and Coretta King were to eat as millions of Indians do, seated on the ground with banana leaves serving as a dish. At Madurai in the late afternoon we saw the ancient Hindu temple, and were overwhelmed in turn by the massive towers as we approached and by the temple itself as we entered and walked through it. A full and meaningful day concluded with a public meeting that night at the new Gandhi Smarak Nidhi museum. About one hundred and fifty people of superior calibre had assembled to hear Martin Luther King and to ask him thoughtful questions.

February 22 : Trivandrum.

Once again the Kings received a royal welcome when our plane landed at the Trivandrum airport. Many people—and naturally, many garlands and beautiful bouquets! . . . Mr Namboodiripad, the Chief Minister of Kerala, who had returned just a few days before from several weeks in Moscow, gave a luncheon for us. Included among the guests was the first woman to be appointed as a High Court Judge in India. The Chief Minister came half an hour before the other guests in order to talk privately with Martin Luther King.... At Cape Comorin that evening we were singularly blessed; a sufficient number of clouds gathered at the close of the afternoon to provide an unbelievably beautiful sunset, and just as this breath-taking spectacle was dying in the West a full moon was rising in the East. Seated on the rocks close to the Gandhi shrine for more than an hour, all of us were deeply moved.

February 23: Trivandrum.

Martin, Dr Reddick, and I went for an early morning swim before breakfast in the kind of lush tropical setting which you see on all the travel posters.... Attended the Legislative Assembly for a short time at the end of the morning. A full afternoon included several significant personal interviews for Dr King, a good press conference, a delightful tea with the Governor and then a very big, over flow public meeting at night. Estimated attendance of those inside and out was about one thousand. The chairman impressed us with his charm and wisdom. Martin spoke with great conviction, and his listeners were obviously touched both by the strength of his argument and the depth of his sincerity.

Once again he challenged his listeners to resist evil and fight oppression all over the world, but not with violence. There was a trail that Gandhi had blazed for all makind to see and follow —and that trail alone led both to enduring justice and enduring peace. He pleaded also for the application of non-violence to the area of international disagreement and conflict. Reminding us that we are confronted with the threat of nuclear war, Dr King stated that 'the choice is no longer between non-violence and violence, but between non-violence and non-existence'. Then, as it happened on so many occasions, Coretta King provided the perfect conclusion to the meeting by singing two beautiful spirituals.

February 24, 25 and 26 : Bangalore.

Having eliminated the automobile journey through the Nilgiri hills and the visit to Mysore and the Brindavan Gardens in order to reduce the strain of travel, we flew directly to Bangalore, and there had a more restful schedule. Our first evening was notable for a wonderful visit to the home of the Chief Minister of Mysore State. His wife and children shared in the visit, which was really heart-warming. The serious discussion centred largely on the economic development of India. The Chief Minister felt that there was need for diverse types of industrial development—large-scale and thoroughly modern, as well as small-scale cottage industries. We will long remember this man and his family. . . . The following day we saw two of Bangalore's factories, and were extremely impressed by the skill and efficiency so readily evident. . . . At 8 o'clock in the morning on February 26 a very fine public meeting was held at the

Institute of World Culture. Martin Luther King opened his address by remarking that two weeks earlier he would have been amazed to be invited to speak in public so early in the day, and would have been convinced that no-one would be present to hear him, even if he accepted the invitation—but two weeks in India had taught him differently. Now he realised that the day began much earlier in India than in America, and he had already started many a day long before the hour of this meeting.

February 26-27 : Bombay.

A fine group of people, headed by Shantilal Shah, Labour Minister for Bombay State, met us at the airport. R.R. Diwakar, Chairman of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, was waiting to greet us when we drove from the airport straight to *Mani Bhavan*. Mr Diwakar took us on a tour of *Mani Bhavan*, carefully and helpfully explaining many things relating to the life and thought of Gandhi. A delightful dinner followed in the beautiful garden of Shantilal Shah's home.... The Bombay public meeting at Green's Hotel at 6 p.m. on the 27th was exceptionally fine. About 400 top-calibre people were assembled. G.L. Mehta, former Ambassador to the United States, presided. R.R. Diwakar gave an excellent introduction as he presented Dr King. Martin himself was truly inspired. Of the many stirring and challenging speeches he delivered in India, somehow this was the finest. Speaker and audience responded to each other as if by a subtle alchemy. In conclusion that night Martin spoke about the emphasis so frequently made in today's world upon the importance of people being adjusted to their environment. Then with deep conviction he challenged this whole assumption. He spoke of the suffering, the exploitation, the injustice, and the degradation of human beings still so much a part of the world of 1959, and went on to urge his listeners to be courageously and forthrightly *maladjusted* to the social evil of their time. All of us felt the impact of his moving plea.

February 28 : Bombay.

A very full day, beginning with another early morning at 8. . . . Fortunately, we arranged to have the Kings see the *Voice of India*, an hour-length film showing certain phases of Gandhi's life, at *Mani Bhavan*. After having seen many places where Gandhi had lived and moved, and after having spoken seriously with so many of his close associates, both Martin and Coretta King found this film deeply moving. They were to refer to this film again and again in the next few days.... An excellent interview with the Governor of Bombay, during which searching discussion ensued about non-violence and about reliance upon it all the way. Mr Diwakar shared in this hour with the Governor, as we dealt with questions such as the following: is non-violence effective in all situations? do we remain faithful even when the non-violent approach proves a failure in an immediate situation? are there individuals and groups who can remain for ever impervious to the appeal of love which refuses to strike back, no matter how grievously it may suffer? . . . A very good hour also with the Chief Minister of Bombay State, though the conversation took an entirely different turn.... A luncheon engagement with younger members of the Congress Party; an excellent press conference, at which the King party

were the guests of the reporters. Martin next met for an hour the African students of Bombay, and found himself again in the familiar discussion about the effectiveness of non-violent resistance to colonialism and tyranny.

March 1, 2 and 3 : Sabarmati Ashram and Kishingarh.

Up at 4 a.m. at *Mani Bhavan* in Bombay in order to catch the 6 a.m. plane to Ahmedabad. People from Sabarmati *Ashram* met us at the airport, and drove us to the *Ashram.* Here a large throng, including children and young people, were on hand to welcome us with garlands when we stepped out of the car. We went immediately to share in the *Ashram* prayers.... The All-India *Shantisena* Conference was being held at a small village mid-way between Ajmer and Kishingarh, and here we met Vinoba Bhave. At the close of the morning session we met Vinoba briefly. Unfortunately, for the first and only time Martin was not well, and was unable to attend the *Shantisena* meetings. After a light lunch with Jayaprakash Narain, he and Coretta King returned to Kishingarh. Dr King had been scheduled to address the Conference, and genuine disappointment was felt because of his inability to do so.... On the morning of the 3rd Martin met Vinoba several miles from Kishingarh, and walked with him to that town. Vinoba Bhave greeted Martin Luther King with a warm embrace. . . . We were most fortunate in spending an hour with Vinoba that morning, and then another hour between six and seven in the evening. The highlights of these interviews have already been published in Bhoodan and other publications.

March 4 : Agra.

Our first and only day of sight-seeing. The Taj Mahal enthralled us in the morning; the Fort proved fascinating in the afternoon, before catching the Punjab Mail to Delhi.

March 5-10 : Delhi.

These days tended to merge one into the other as no other days had done. Of course, there were last-minute details to be cared for, and arrangements made for departure from India.... On the evening of March 6 the Kings had dinner at the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi as guests of G. Ramachandran, and had an opportunity at that time for helpful discussions and clarification of many impressions gained in their 'hurricane tour' (so one Bombay Nidhi worker described it to me). Again on Sunday Martin and Coretta spent the major portion of the day at the Nidhi. The Kings were staying at the Quaker Centre, and after Meeting for Worship after the manner of Friends they drove to the Nlidhi. Here they spent a most interesting day, which concluded formally with the farewell reception tendered them by the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, and informally with a music recital in Ramachandran's home. R.R. Diwakar presided at the reception; Dr King and Dr Reddick spoke briefly in response to the cordial and warm appreciation of the visit expressed by G. Ramachandran. And once again Coretta King provided a beautiful and appropriate ending with two spirituals.... On March 7 the Kings were for the second time luncheon guests in Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's beautiful home. The same afternoon we made our way to Sushila Nayar's house where a

most stimulating conversation developed over the tea cups. The day before we had an excellent discussion with Pyarelal Nayar for two hours in his office, after which we enjoyed meeting and conversing with several people who had known Gandhi at tea in Pyarelal's home.... March 9 was the last full day for the Kings in India. A press conference was held at the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi that morning, and a lively discussion ensued with the members of the press after Dr King read the following prepared statement to them:

'Our much too brief pilgrimage to India has regretfully come to a close. I wish to thank everyone for the way your doors and hearts have been opened to me, my wife and Dr Reddick. Leaders in and out of government, organisations—particularly the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and the Quaker Centre—and many homes and families have done their utmost to make our short stay both pleasant and instructive.

'We have learned a lot. We are not rash enough to presume that we know India—vast sub-continent with all of its people, problems, contrasts and achievements. However, since we have been asked about our impressions, we venture one or two generalisations :

'First, we think that the spirit of Gandhi is much stronger today than some people believe. There is not only the direct and indirect influence of his comrades and associates but also the organised efforts that are being made to preserve the Mahatma's letters and other writings, the pictures, monuments, the work of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and the movement led by the sainted Vinoba Bhave. These are but a few examples of the way Gandhiji will be permanently enshrined in the hearts of the people of India.

'Moreover, many government officials who do not follow Gandhi literally, apply his spirit to domestic and international problems.

'Secondly, I wish to make a plea to the people and government of India. The issue of world peace is so critical that I feel compelled to offer a suggestion that came to me during the course of our conversations with Vinobaji.

'The peace-loving peoples of the world have not yet succeeded in persuading my own country, America, and Soviet Russia to eliminate fear and disarm themselves. Unfortunately, as yet America and the Soviet Union have not shown the faith and moral courage to do this. Vinobaji has said that India or any other nation that has the faith and moral courage could disarm itself tomorrow, even unilaterally.

'It may be that just as India had to take the lead and show the world that national independence could be achieved non-violently, so India may have to take the lead and call for universal disarmament and if no other nation will join her immediately, India should declare itself for disarmament *unilaterally*.

'Such an act of courage would be a great demonstration of the spirit of

the Mahatma and would be the greatest stimulus to the rest of the world to do likewise.

'Moreover, any nation that would rake such a brave step would automatically so draw to itself the support of the multitudes of the earth that any would-be aggressor would be discouraged from risking the wrath of mankind.'

The last evening in India was spent at the home of Acharya Kripalani where we were guests for dinner. The Kings and Dr Reddick had been tremendously impressed when they met the Kripalanis in February, and again at Sushila Nayar's tea, and they were eager to learn more about Acharya Kripalani's days with Gandhi and about the development and growth of his thinking. This final evening together was thus most salutary.... The last morning was typical of many mornings—an early departure at the airport! The customs officials were most cooperative, and allowed Swami Vishwananda and other friends from the Nidhi, as well as the Bristol family, to accompany the Kings to the plane. Most happily at the last minute Sucheta and Acharya Kripalani arrived. Sucheta had just got off another plane and hurried from Palam to Safdarjung to say a final farewell. We all said good-bye. We had flown all over India together during the past four weeks, and it was odd to see the Kings board the plane and to realise that I was no longer a member of the party. It had been a rich and meaningful month. We had seen a great deal, and had learned a great deal together. There had been serious moments, difficult moments, light-hearted moments, and amusing incidents. This is the stuff out of which fellowship and friendship are made. And as the plane took off for Karachi, I knew that it carried two friends with it, while at my side stood another friend and comrade of the road, Swami Vishwananda.

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Between then and now, a lot has changed in India and the world. What Mahatma Gandhi called a mad and blind rush for development has since engulfed America and Europe, and the rest of the world has joined in. Its destructive consequences are there for all to see. It is only in the recognition of Mahatma Gandhi's prophesies that the United Nations has declared Gandhi Jayanti, October 2, be observed as International Day of Non-Violence. The threats to our existence have made us conscious of the inevitability of non-violence. Several social changes are occurring around the world. An inspiring example among those changes is the re-election as president of an African-American in the United States. This is the country where Dr. King was murdered, like Mahatma Gandhi, for fighting to end social inequality and racism. India's democracy has already presented several examples of elected representatives from communities which have faced social oppression in the past.

The light of non-violence does not disappear in the darkness of violence. Instead, it lights up the darkness over and over, radiating a new, humane consciousness. The Gandhi Smarak Nidhi finds its relevance in efforts to keep that lamp lit.

This reprint of the 1959 travel report is a humble effort in that direction.

– **Ramchandra Rahi,** *Secretary*
Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi